

Select Committee on Communications

Corrected oral evidence: Skills for the Theatre Industry

Tuesday 14 March 2017

4.35 pm

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Members present: Lord Best (Chairman); Lord Allen of Kensington; Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury; Earl of Caithness; Bishop of Chelmsford; Lord Gilbert of Panteg; Baroness Kidron; Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall; Baroness Quin; Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury.

Evidence Session No. 2

Heard in Public

Questions 13 - 20

Witnesses

I: Professor Stephen Lacey, Chair, Standing Conference of University Drama Departments; Bryan Raven, Vice-Chair, National College for the Creative and Cultural Industries.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witnesses

Professor Stephen Lacey and Bryan Raven.

Q13 **The Chairman:** Thank you both for coming. Could I ask you please to introduce yourselves and give us a bit of background about yourselves? Professor Lacey, would you like to start?

Professor Lacey: Yes. I am Stephen Lacey. I am an emeritus professor at the University of South Wales—I took early retirement in 2013—and I am the chair of the Standing Conference of University Drama Departments, otherwise known as SCUDD. It is a rather unfortunate acronym, but we are stuck with it. SCUDD is the professional body that represents university drama departments. It is a voluntary body.

Bryan Raven: I am Bryan Raven. I am the managing director of a company called White Light, which was historically a theatre lighting company. We are now a technical production company, employing 220 staff in Wimbledon. Unless anyone has a production or an event they need some equipment for, I suspect I am here in my capacity as vice-chair of the National College for the Creative and Cultural Industries.

As I am sure many of you will recognise, once you stick your head above the parapet and voice an opinion, you end up being sucked into various committees. I was sucked into Skillscene, which is a not-for-profit forum for backstage training, where various member organisations come together. I ended up as chair by not moving quickly enough, and through that I ended up on the board of CCSkills (Cultural & Creative Skills). Then, a few years ago, BIS started this National College adventure that we are on. Part of my passion was having a college that works with rather than against employers. I ended up on the Board, and again by not moving quickly enough I have ended up as vice-chair. I suspect that is the capacity in which I am here. Separating my opinions will be difficult.

The Chairman: We look forward to them all.

- Q14 **Baroness Quin:** My questions relate to schools, what sort of subjects at school level can encourage people to take up careers in the creative industries and, indeed, how take-up of these subjects could be improved. Related to that, regarding the recent policy announcements of T-levels and so on, what role do you see these vocational qualifications playing now and in the future? I was interested that we were told about the potential acute shortage of carpenters, for example, but other skills too. What do you see as the challenges in that sphere, in relation to vocational qualifications and their take-up?

Professor Lacey: To address the very general question first, a broad range of subjects is best. University drama departments tend not to demand, for example, A-level theatre studies. It is fine if students come with it, but they do not ask for it, simply because it is not widely available. It just would not be fair to many of our applicants if we demanded it, so we do not. We are very pleased to see an arts subject somewhere in the profile, whether it is an A-level in an arts subject—preferably theatre studies, for us—or a BTEC in performing arts; increasingly, our members are accepting students who come with BTECs.

There are two reasons why that is the case. First, as the Government have recognised, having arts in the curriculum benefits all pupils. Pupils tend to do better if they are doing an arts subject, so that is important. Also, an arts subject studied at school helps students to orientate themselves towards what their future careers might be. They come understanding better what they are getting into, what they require, what they are being asked for. For those reasons, an arts subject within the A-level/BTEC profile, while not essential, is very useful.

There is now a question as to whether that is under threat. There is some evidence that schools are restricting both the number of drama teachers

they are employing, and the number of hours devoted to the teaching of arts subjects. That evidence is out there in the public domain; I have some figures, although I will not go into them now. That is a real worry. There is also a genuine argument about whether the Government's EBacc requirement as a performance measure in schools is also affecting the uptake and offer of arts subjects in schools. A recent report argued that it was not, but that interpretation of the figures has been questioned. There is some worry, which is still working its way through, about whether arts subjects are now under threat in schools. My sense is that they possibly are, and we have not quite seen the pattern emerge yet.

Baroness Quin: What about technical qualifications?

Bryan Raven: It is still very early days. One concern we have had when discussing them is that they seem to be structured so they are forcing someone down either an engineering or a science route. One of the joys of the creative industries is the application of technology creatively. A rigger who has superb technical qualifications goes into a space and will look around for a creative engineering solution. If we force people down particular routes, through school subjects, we risk driving the creativity out of them. That is what we need: creative people who can apply technology.

Baroness Quin: Do you think that Government are addressing that concern. If not, how best can we get more communication with Government on these issues, so that they do not impose false choices on people at school, which could inhibit them from looking creatively and seeing the connections between the different subjects?

Professor Lacey: The Government are promoting STEM subjects. A number of us would rather that it was "STEAM" and arts were in that profile as well, so that we looked to promote the arts within broader education, not as a separate part. That would indeed involve exploring the connection between arts, as we traditionally understand it, and newer forms of technology and engineering. We can open some really interesting doors if we go down that route, and I would urge the Government to consider it.

Baroness Quin: As a final question, do you get a feeling that career guidance in schools is helpful to the creative industries? Do you have any awareness of good practice among schools in opening students' eyes to the possibility of careers in the creative industries?

Bryan Raven: Our experience, both as an employer and in backstage training, is that careers advice is woeful. There is a complete lack of awareness of the careers available in the creative industries. Take carpenters—I pick on that subject because Julian was talking about it—and making them aware that there is a whole career associated with making sets. There is a desperate shortage of trained wigs-and-wardrobe staff. One of the problems, if we go down the route of T-levels, is whether people doing hair and make-up are being made aware that there is a whole hair and make-up career path in the theatre, film and TV industries.

A lot of people are working very hard to try to raise the profile of what we do. Julian touched on this: 2012 was one of the proudest moments of our industry's life, because the press were all waiting for that to fail. We all knew it would not fail. Those guys have been running Olympic shows all around the world for years. They are all ex-theatre people, and we are the best in the world at doing it. No one in the careers advisory service is pointing out that all around the world there are British people doing good work.

Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: On the question of teaching creative subjects in schools, are there enough qualified teachers coming through the pipeline?

Professor Lacey: I am not aware of a shortage. There may be one, but I am not aware of it. The problem is that the number of jobs available is shrinking. Schools are employing fewer teachers. That means that some of our graduates, a proportion of whom would always go on to teaching, are finding that that avenue is closed to them.

Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: We are producing them, but not enough opportunities for them in schools.

Professor Lacey: We are producing the people who could then become teachers, but some of them do not have the opportunity.

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: Picking up on that, although it is not what I was going to ask, I thought there was quite a shortage of trained drama teachers.

Professor Lacey: I am not aware of that. There may be, but that is not what I have heard.

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: Many children and young people come to drama from extra-curricular angles, and it was suggested to us in the earlier session that this tended to mean there were more middle-class groups coming through. Is there anything you think Government could do, through policy, to encourage a wider base for that? You probably both know about the Sorrell Foundation. Sir John and Frances Sorrell have Saturday clubs and so on. That is obviously philanthropic, but is there anything that government policy could do to encourage enthusiasm for the theatre, drama and so on outside school?

Bryan Raven: One of my other hats is as a trustee of a youth theatre in Putney, and there has been an increasing trend that we are not able to charge the full amount for drama classes or after-school clubs. That percentage is going up year on year, which is making it harder to balance the books. We try to run it on a not-for-profit basis. The sort of thing we could do with help on is something like cheap access to local government premises for running drama classes.

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: What about schools?

Bryan Raven: It could be schools and so on. It is that kind of thing. Obviously we apply for funds and get grants and suchlike for specific projects, but there are empty buildings sitting around in south-west London that we cannot use, because of a mixture of bureaucracy, cost

and insurance. That is the sort of thing I would like to think some creative use could be made of.

Professor Lacey: It is a bit like motherhood and apple pie, in a way. How could we possibly not encourage people to become involved in extra-curricular activity as much as they want to? The danger is always that it becomes a substitute for an educational initiative. However good the extra-curricular activity is, the opportunity to study the subject in school will always be preferable and more open to people from diverse backgrounds.

Q15 **Baroness Kidron:** We have strayed into my question, but I want to give you the opportunity to answer it more directly. The Arts Council reported that there is a widening gap between the skills demanded by the sector and those supplied by education. We have alluded to that already. I would be interested to know what skills are missing; that might come from you, Bryan. Secondly, what can we point at in education that could be a recommendation from this Committee, saying, "Here is the problem; here is the solution"?

Bryan Raven: There are a number of answers to this, one of which is current qualifications. We are a very niche industry. I am a great believer in trailblazer apprenticeships and in changing and becoming employee driven. However, we have been working on them for three years and have still not got them over the line. We are still teaching and including in our apprenticeships a qualification that, if it were the driving test, would include having a man walk out in front of the car with a red flag and using a starting handle. It is not fit for purpose. We use it as a way of unlocking the funding, but we actually teach our own curriculum, which is what the trailblazer has been based on. There is a problem with the qualifications coming through, for such a small, relatively niche industry. They take so long to get through. I understand all of that. BIS was moving faster; it has gone back to DfE. That has meant almost starting again in certain areas, which has not helped. I do not know whether that is right or wrong; I just know it has taken us longer.

When we were talking about the national college to BEIS, as one of the pitches, one of my little metaphors was that we now have apprenticeships coming through, which is great, and we have plenty of degree courses doing teaching backstage. The question was, what was wrong with the three-year tertiary education, and I said it was generating, in military terms, an officer class. We are getting from universities this officer class of designers, production managers, producers, who are going to go on and rule the world. What the industry desperately needs is NCOs. We need technicians with leadership ability, who can run a team.

That is one of the reasons I believe in the national college. Our main offering is a level 4 diploma, which is a one-year course, designed to sit between degree education and apprenticeships, for those kinds of people.

Baroness Kidron: Forgive me if I have not understood this completely, but if you could get the qualification fit for purpose, if you could say,

"This is what we need" and that bit was dealt with, could there be multiple suppliers and employers, so it would unlock the gate for industry?

Bryan Raven: Yes. The National College has been working with the University of the Arts London, and I have been very impressed. It is not my world at all; it has been a fascinating journey. It has built a framework, which we think could be applied across multiple skills, with employers saying, "This is what we want our next generation of wardrobe mistresses to be able to do", and you just apply these particular criteria to them.

The funding is tough. All our board meetings at the National College are about money and how we will afford things, because it is a niche industry. One of the reasons we are having to put the apprentices through the college is that we are generating, as an industry at the moment, only 20, 30 or 40 apprenticeships in each skill area. The colleges want 200 bricklayers or 300 hairdressers, because that is how they make their numbers add up. We have been losing money on delivering apprenticeships, because it costs the same amount to deliver 20 apprenticeships as it does to deliver 50 apprenticeships, more or less. It is expandable, but they will always be small numbers.

Baroness Kidron: There is something about that model that Government could look at.

Bryan Raven: I think so. I am the first to say we should not be rushing qualifications through, so they are half-cocked and not fit for purpose, but there has to be a better middle ground.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: Can I just pick up on that? You made an observation earlier about people going into hairdressing, but not being encouraged to think about whether they might become wigmakers or go into hairdressing in theatre or film. You keep, understandably, referring to a niche industry, but what are the additional specialist skills on top of what is being provided at the basic craft level, within other kinds of tertiary education, that you need people to have acquired before they become fit for your industry's purposes? How are those to be delivered? Is that what you are doing?

Bryan Raven: To a certain extent, yes. As an employer, I am less worried about the absolute skills, because they move so fast. Take the IT industry. There is no point: if we were teaching IT, we would still be teaching a Windows 7 qualification, despite the fact that the graduates were working on Windows 10. It is not the technical skills; it is more their ability to adapt, their employability, their commercial skills. We talk about hiring for attitude, rather than ability. It is about those kinds of skills. They are not really skills, so it is not a very good answer, is it?

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: They are attributes, perhaps.

Bryan Raven: Yes, they are the attributes that we are looking for. There are lots of little technical skills, but generally, if we can get to the people, we can open their eyes to what a wonderful world we live in. Picking up on somebody's point from the earlier session about salaries, it is Maslow's

triangle: money is not everything. Quality of life is a huge motivator to all of us. For example, I love not having to wear a suit most days, not having to commute on a train and all that. That is worth a lot of money to a lot of people. Money ceases to become the motivator, as long as there is enough money on the table, and that is one of the key things of which we have to make sure.

Baroness Kidron: Professor Lacey, do you agree with the analysis about the officer class? Is that something you recognise?

Professor Lacey: Yes. It is a good analogy, but like most analogies it breaks down at some point. University does not suit everyone. We have to have a rounded ecology of training and education in this field.

To answer the question more generally, one of the differences between, say, a drama department in a university and a drama conservatoire or school would be that most people who go to drama school know before they go there what they want to do. They go because they want to act or because they want to be stage managers. They have known that from an early age, and that shapes their choices. Many people who go and study drama at university have not made that choice. If you think about it, it is a hell of an ask to expect young people at 18—and effectively at 16, when they make their choices for A-level study—to know exactly what they want to do. University drama departments are quite good at helping students choose where they want to go, but the choice is one they may not make until quite late on in their academic careers.

One thing that our members have been doing is looking at the ways in which, particularly in the final year of study, students on essentially academic courses, which nevertheless entail a great deal of practical work, might be encouraged to think about the world of work. There are some really interesting models around: structured placements, workshop programmes with directors, working alongside marketing people for a time. Those kinds of models are interesting and valuable, but they come late in the day.

When people talk about skills shortages, I would really like some more precision about where those shortages lie, because looking at the literature it is not that precise. The 2010 report referred to in your briefing document talks about marketing and ICT skills. One can see those as being genuine skills, and there would be skills shortages, in that a drama graduate is not likely to have those skills and will need to acquire them.

In some ways, we need to look at the postgraduate area. I do not mean postgraduate studies; I mean literally the postgraduate area and the continuing professional development area. How can we support young people out there who are trying to make their way as self-employed artists and forming small companies? Many of our graduates go on to form small companies, some of which will only last two years, some of which will be funded by working as a barista. They will try to make the work happen, and they will feel they do not have any real support. If we looked at ways of investing in continuing professional development, we

would find it easier to both identify the skills that were needed, and help to address them.

Baroness Kidron: Can I ask a very quick yes/no question? Am I right in understanding both of you to be saying that, in schools, further education and so on, access to the real world is part of the solution? You have said that in respect of schools. Visibility and understanding the world of work is key.

Professor Lacey: I think so, absolutely. We are getting better at it, but we could go a lot further.

Bryan Raven: There is a stage engineering company that has been struggling desperately. It is growing and looking for project engineers. Every time you see the owner, he says, "You don't know anyone I could poach, do you?" Following the downturn in the oil and gas industry, he has picked up three engineers from that industry, who are delighted that they do not have to live in Aberdeen and love the fact that what they do is fun and enjoyable.

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: It is like the Jimmy Carr story about Shell.

Bryan Raven: Yes, of course. It is about making our industry visible to the world at large as a legitimate, proper industry that UK plc needs. More people coming in from the outside, at all levels, whether at graduate level or even at second or third career level, would be a great boon to the industry.

Q16 **Earl of Caithness:** Bryan, a moment ago, you said that money is not everything, but it is actually quite important when you are at the starting level, particularly for early salaries. Despite what you said, we have evidence that two-thirds of performers and creative workers say they have had to turn down work because pay is too low or there is no pay. Yet, the creative industries are one of Britain's success stories. Can you explain this dichotomy? Is it your students who are not being paid, or is it another branch of the industry? Is this increasing, or is it now being reduced?

Bryan Raven: I am not really qualified to answer that, on the grounds that my world is 'back of house' and 'behind the scenes'. While I was briefly involved in Drama UK, the employment figures I saw for the graduate performers was horrible, in terms of how hard they have to work to earn a living. Compare that with the technical graduates from drama colleges and so on, who are nearly all in full employment, the good ones from the day they graduate. In fact, the good ones all go freelance.

You are right. There is a big problem for performers, because of the joy and buzz of being a performer. Back of house and backstage, there is far less of a problem. People certainly do not have to work for nothing. There is still the whole problem of interns, which I know Julian talked about. As a society, we just have to make unpaid interns as unacceptable as

drink-driving. It just should not be happening. On the technical side of things, it is less of a problem.

Professor Lacey: It is a really interesting question. Who is making the money here? If it is not the performers, who is making the money? I do not know. In some ways, I cannot answer your question, except that there are some very big and powerful media players out there, who are clearly taking some of that. The issue behind this is low pay, which is endemic in the theatre profession for most people. In one sense, it has always been like that. It is about, in some ways, an excess of supply over demand. On the performance side, there have always been more actors who wish to act than there are jobs for them to do. There has been a remorseless pressing down on salaries as a result.

The informal, self-employed nature of the profession is not new. This has not arisen with the gig economy; it is an established part of how actors have operated as a profession for a very long time. The informal nature of that arrangement has also, I think, forced down salaries. To be honest, I have no solution to this. I cannot see a single thing we can point to and say, "If we do that, it will change".

One of the themes of this afternoon has been the resistance to unpaid internships, to colluding in your own exploitation, and I would absolutely agree that that is completely unacceptable. It is something that our members are very hot on. We run, as an organisation, a mail list, which has 3,500 to 4,000 members. Occasionally, a theatre company will post an advert offering "training", which is quite obviously unpaid work. At this point, the entire list descends on them from a great height and points out that this is really not an acceptable way to behave. We are becoming very attuned to this and aware of the problems, and hopefully we can drive it out by shaming, if in no other way.

Earl of Caithness: Bryan, can I come back and pick up on your point? For the back-room and technical staff, there seems to be no problem for the good ones in getting a job. You said that many of your lot are going freelance, because they are making far more money doing that.

Bryan Raven: This is the nature of the industry. Full-time jobs, to a certain extent, do not exist anymore. The best example, which I always use, is of Watford Palace. When I first did shows there in the 1980s, there were seven or eight full-time staff backstage in the lighting, sound and stage crew. The last time I was there doing a show, there were two. Everybody else is casual. Everyone else is brought in on a show-by-show, project-by-project basis. They have no choice but to be freelance.

Some may be freelance based in Watford and only work at two or three theatres. Some may be freelance and work all over the world, because they are the ones people want on their productions.

Q17 **Lord Gilbert of Panteg:** I am interested in the difference between the technical side and the creative side.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall: They are all creative.

Bryan Raven: You mean the performers.

Lord Gilbert of Panteg: Is the problem not basically one of supply and demand: that there are too many people seeking a relatively small number of roles?

Professor Lacey: Yes. It is also a function, particularly in performance and theatre-making areas, of people wanting to create their own work, wanting to do what they want to do, and trying to find a way to do it. They sometimes succeed, spectacularly well. They sometimes fail and go off to do something else. That is not just about supply and demand, but the underlying economic logic is about supply and demand.

Lord Gilbert of Panteg: It is hard to see how you can address that—how you can find ways of rewarding those people for something there is no market need for.

Bryan Raven: I would not get too obsessed with the performers, because for every performer on the stage there are 10 people backstage. There is an accountant, a book-keeper, a box office, a stage door keeper. You can have one person in a show at the Old Vic and 50 people working backstage, beyond the very visible workforce.

Lord Gilbert of Panteg: There is not a problem of unemployment backstage, largely. People are coming through, finding roles and being paid a fair wage, although there may be some issues about the form of freelance employment versus traditional employment. In other roles it seems to be evident that there is an oversupply of people. It is a market problem.

Bryan Raven: Unfortunately, the freelance and SME nature of the creative industries is such that I do not believe there are any numbers to say how many people are working in them each year. If someone is working in a workshop in East London making books as props for the production of *Harry Potter*, as a sole trader, are they registered as being in the creative industries? No, probably not. You can think about a show like that, and how many people are involved in making the props and so on.

The issue we have going forward—and the whole point of the inquiry is the skills gap—is that we have an ageing skilled workforce, and we do not have enough people coming up through the ranks or joining the industry, for a variety of reasons. A lot of it is outside of our control. One of the problems is that the industry is predominantly based in London and south-east England. The stress and the costs—not just financially but emotionally—for someone young living in London who is starting a new career, are huge. We have 200 staff; we see this every day. That puts people off. I was being facetious earlier about Aberdeen. If someone is told there is a choice between a well-paid job in Aberdeen and a less well paid job in London, they may go and take the job in Aberdeen.

My big underlying point is that there is a lack of acceptance behind the scenes of what the creative industries do and contribute to the world and the economy.

Baroness Kidron: Funnily enough, you have raised the issue of housing, which I was about to raise. I will bypass that, but I wanted to put a

marker down. We are talking about performers and about behind the stage, but in between those are the writers, directors and designers. There is a whole group of people, both employed and employers, who create jobs and need jobs. I wanted to put that on the record and make sure we include those people in our thinking. Otherwise, it gets a bit polarised.

Q18 Bishop of Chelmsford: You heard us speak earlier today about one of our concerns, which is diversity. Just to put the question to you, is there a need for greater diversity in the industry? What can be done to encourage and support it? Is this something you note with those who apply to study and those you employ? Are you monitoring it in any way?

Professor Lacey: This is a real concern. It is a concern in the industry. Darren Henley in his recent speech to the Arts Council noted that only 8% of chief executive officers are from black and minority-ethnic backgrounds, so there is a real problem here. We see it also in universities. Universities tend to be whiter than the general population, and drama departments are the same. I genuinely think that is changing.

It is also more regionally, geographically and socially variable than one might think—or probably not. It is quite obvious when you think about it. For example, my university, the University of South Wales, recruits very heavily from south Wales and the Welsh valleys, so it has a high proportion of students on courses who are the first generation to go to university and who come from fairly working-class backgrounds. De Montfort University, as another example, recruits very heavily from its local region, and its drama department has a very high proportion of black and minority-ethnic students. It is a mixed picture. There are acres of complete whiteness and social exclusivity, but there are some really interesting variations here. It is a problem. We need to do more about it.

Bishop of Chelmsford: What do you think that “more” could be?

Professor Lacey: In some ways, if I just think about universities for the moment, we are constrained partly by our university’s own policies. Universities are attempting, and have been for some time, to widen participation. That is the phrase we use: “widen participation”. There has been some success, but not always huge success. In my experience, the departments that do best are those that have good, strong outreach activities and a clear strategy of going out into areas of the community that would not normally think of applying to do drama at university, and talking to them. The example of De Montfort is a good one, and it has a very good strategy for doing this. The University of South Wales has a good strategy for going out into the Welsh valleys.

There are local things that we can do, and we can do better, to bring people in. In some ways, it is an accumulation of small, local efforts like that that will begin to make a difference. Your previous speakers were probably better qualified than I am to talk about how this might be done within the theatre profession itself, but perhaps it is the same thing: lots of small initiatives that will chip away at the resistance and prejudices that surround this.

Bryan Raven: Apprenticeships, once we get them working properly, are a great leveller, because, rather than three years and 30 grand, it is paid employment of 10 to 15 grand. You are working, you are in there and you are straight into the workforce. That is a great leveller. It is part of the core values of the national college. It is a one-year level 4 course; tuition fees are £5,000, which you can get a loan for. It is much more accessible than a three-year course. Part of the business plan is for it to be regional and have hubs around the country within three years.

It is about acceptance. Within diversity, I am including gender, background and disability, as well as just BAME. The industry, during the 30 years I have been in it, has made huge leaps and bounds, certainly on gender. There is still a way to go, but it is much, much better. We have to find those routes in. So much of the traditional West End and professional theatre work was based on who you knew and it was self-fulfilling. If you have that as one way into the industry—knowing someone who will get you the job or coming through a white middle-class drama school—of course there are going to be disadvantages. This has to be challenged; it is still going to be there.

Professor Lacey: I wanted to come back with two very quick things. First, let us not forget about social exclusivity. Social class is an issue here as well. Not only is the theatre profession quite white, but it is very middle-class in its orientation. One reason why unpaid internships have taken hold is that people can live off their parents for a while.

Secondly, in some ways, we also need to address the curriculum that we teach. We did some research with our members into diversity, and got replies from both students and staff. Some of the comments people made were incredibly interesting and quite salutary. Students from black and minority-ethnic backgrounds said, "Look, there is nothing on this curriculum that speaks to my culture". We have to take that on the chin and see what we need to do about it.

We can begin to introduce very specific initiatives to address this. One of the things I got involved with some time ago, in the 1980s, was introducing the first theatre of the deaf course in higher education. It is not called that any more, but it is still surviving. It recruited deaf performers and helped to generate a deaf theatre culture and a deaf theatre industry.

Bryan Raven: I have one last point on apprentices. If I read the Budget correctly, maintenance grants are now available for people who are not necessarily going on to degree level, which is a step forward. I do not know the detail, I confess, but when I read that I thought, "That is a good thing", because, for a one-year course, if you do not have somewhere to live, you are pushing back again.

- Q19 **Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury:** One recurring theme of this discussion has been that freelance, casual work is part of the nature of the theatre and other creative industries, and that this is probably a barrier to lots of people coming into these industries. Is this something we have to just live with? Is it inevitable, or can anything be done to ameliorate it?

Bryan Raven: I am sure it can. It is a necessary evil, to a certain extent. I have known a lot of very good, incredibly creative freelance technicians who take a full-time role in an organisation and, within two or three years, we have persuaded them to leave, because their creativity has gone. The nature of what we do does not always fit nicely with working in a structured organisation; you lose the creativity. I think it is a necessary evil. Otherwise, you end up with the wrong people doing the job.

I once was lucky enough to go to East Berlin and see the Berliner Ensemble. I watched them set up for a particular show, and they were discussing whose turn it was to play the lead that day. It was a very eastern European way of doing theatre. Every member of the company got a chance to play Julius Caesar, or whatever it was. It was very democratic. There is a danger, if you employ people full-time, that you end up doing that. "We are paying him anyway; get him to design the lighting, even though he is a sound designer". There are things we can do to help. I am sure there are legislative and tax issues.

Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury: What are they?

Bryan Raven: I do not know. I would hesitate to give an opinion to such an august body about what could be done to help. One of the areas where we have a big problem with the freelance industry—and this crosses over into events and corporate, and concert touring and film—is a lack of a CPD culture. When the SOLT research comes out, I think that will be one of the biggest points: freelance, self-employed people do not want to give up a day's work; they do not want to pay for the course; they do not want to be seen signing up for a particular course. "I thought you knew how to use Windows 10. Why are you doing a Windows 10 course?" There is an element of that. I have long thought that Government could support both employers and the self-employed through some kind of tax relief on proper, legitimate training.

With my employer hat on, we took advantage of a fantastic scheme called growth accelerator, run by BIS two or three years ago, which match-funded legitimate training. We had to prove we were using a proper trainer. We had to pay a registration fee to make sure there were no time-wasters. We were given an account manager, and they match-funded how much money we spent on training. Our £50,000 on management training that year became £100,000. We doubled the amount of training we were offering. There has to be something like that.

We have a shrinking working population that has to provide income for an ageing population. The skills have to improve. We do not have coal miners anymore; we do not have those people at the low end. We have to upskill our workforce as a society, and the only way we are going to do that for people who are already in the workplace is training. If we are going over to a gig economy and self-employment, who is going to pay for that training? If there was a tax relief available on legitimate training, that would seem a no-brainer to me.

The Chairman: We always end with a question on Brexit. This is a new tradition.

Q20 **Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury:** You might not be surprised to hear where it is coming from. It is probably more to you, Bryan. We are starting on this path. What are your asks?

Bryan Raven: 24 June was an interesting day at work, where one-third of the staff are non-UK. Commercially, it seems to be working out okay for us. The exchange rate is in our favour; we are a big exporter, and so on.

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury: It has not started yet.

Bryan Raven: I heard the question earlier. From a creative industries point of view, and specifically from a skills point of view, if we do not have free movement of technicians, designers and performers in the UK, it will be only a matter of time before we struggle to call ourselves world class. There will be barriers to people coming in and adding to that, and reciprocal barriers going back. It is already harder to get into America on working visas, with what is going on over there. We have already seen technicians unable to get visas to go and work on Broadway or on tours in America. That has already started. If we, as the UK, do not have freedom of movement of people, let alone the commercial aspects, it will be a very sad day for the creative industries.

Professor Lacey: I would endorse that. Freedom of movement is very important. One of the developments we have noticed is the number of EU, and indeed non-EU, students who have come to study our subject areas. They bring an extraordinary range of cultural and other skills and experience to bear. If they are not entering our market, and our students are not entering theirs, that is a real issue.

The Chairman: Thank you both very much indeed. It was extremely instructive and most helpful.